

**[Mr. Geo. Sterns]**

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FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS North Platte

DATE Nov. 9, 1938 SUBJECT Lincoln Co. Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Mr. Geo. Sterns East 10th Street N. Plat
2. Date and time of interview
3. Place of interview Home
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. An ordinary but modern 5 or 6 room house, not very impressively furnished considering income and position, but homey. An old fashioned spittoon occupied a place by his chair in the living room. [[???

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS North Platte, Nebr.

DATE Nov. 9, 1938 SUBJECT Lincoln Co. Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mr. Geo. Sterns East 10th Street N. Platte

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1. Ancestry Scotch, Irish and Yankee and Irish
2. Place and date of birth Clark Co. Wis. near Spardy about '77
3. Family 9 children
4. Place lived in, with dates Wis. Mo. Nebr. Lincoln Co. 1887
5. Education, with dates No school at first. Mother was teacher and he took his book out while herding cattle to work matter. Later White Plains school was built. Winter of '94-5 [?] attended school in North Platte, last semester.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Farm lad — '94 U. P. section hand '97-'98 fireman '02 Engineer in 1914 promoted to passenger. Is pulling the City of Denver streamline. Is now oldest engineer in 2nd [?] [?]
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities Methodist raised, joined Presby 1913. Belongs to Odd Fellows and all staff except [canton?]. Also to Locomotive Engineers
9. Description of informant Brown friendly eyes, a good smile, fairly tall not very fleshed, has capable looking hands, wears policeman style sleeves is conservative and very likeable.
10. Other points gained in interview This man's life is a good example of quiet unremitting well directed industry. There are not enough men like him, even in Nebr.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS North Platte

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DATE Nov. 9, 1938 SUBJECT Lincoln Co. Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mr. Geo Sterns East 10th St. N. Platte N

Mr. Sterns has been in Lincoln County 51 years. When he was 10 years of age he with his family moved here from [Chilliothe?], Knox County Mo. and homesteaded 22 miles northeast of North Platte when homesteaders had to live 7 years on their claim to [grove?] up.

Mr. Sterns father, thomas has served three years in the Civil War and was discharged in '63, wounded, he drew \$30.00 per month pension and was only able to help with the gardening and some of the lighter work. Brothers older than Mr. Sterns did the farming and when he became 15 years of age he took over the farming as his two older brothers had married.

The family did not suffer the hardships of '91-'92 and '93 as badly as some due to the father's pension but got on relief to get corn for seed after the grasshoppers of '91 and raised bumper corn crop in '2 and '3 and better in '4.

The family lived in a sod house and the mother having been a teacher kept the children busy with their books as there was no school. Later a school was built called the White Plains school. Mr. Sterns early job was the herding of cattle and he very wisely combined his studying with his cattle herding. After the first year he herded horse back and could study in the shade of the horse. At night his mother heard him recite.

The provision by which the lad rode herd rather than walk was managed by himself. He broke a colt to ride. His sister younger than he often went along for company and the two of them had their studies together.

Mr. Sterns liked to hunt and fish and still does a little of it.

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His mother was a wonderful manger and his father being handicapped she expected her children to learn to work which they did and "jumped in and helped out." Much time was spent in gathering buffalo chip and cow chips and corn stalks which were burnt for cooking and household purposes to [save?] the coal which was used only for severe weather.

At the age of 15 Mr. Sterns took over the responsiblity of the farming when his brother went back to Iowa to get married. He farmed for two years when at the age of 17 the family moved to town.

Believeing himself in need of more education Mr. Sterns went to the North Platte school after the holidays of that year until in May when he quit school and worked 2 years. In '97 he went to work on the U. P. section and in '98 went to fireing. He was promoted in 1902 to engineer and in 1914 to passenger engineer. At present has pulled the City of Denver streamline over a year. He was an engineer before he was 24. He only fired 4 years and 4 months.

Mr. Sterns is the oldest engineer in the 2nd district.

Mr. Sterns believes people were more social and that they had better times in the early times. He said when ever a bunch got together they were likely to get to dancing, just put the furniture back and danced in the kitchen or anywhere sometimes there'd only be one room in the house, sometimes no floor then they'd just wet down the packed earth and dance to the fiddle.

He learned to play from his older brothers and when he got to working bought himself a violin and played by ear, and often for the dances. Old favorites which he remembers part of were:

Virginia Reel Lady around lady and gent so low 4 hands up and 4 hands around Balance on the corner and swing the back lady Balance on the corner and swing your corner left

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Left man right hand your partner and left Lagrande Balance your partner and swing them all around.